

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

O.H.65

CAVANAGH, H.L. (BERT) & CLARICE

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

June 21, 1980



INTERVIEWEES: H. L. (BERT) & CLARICE CAVANAGH

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: Interview with H. L. (Bert) Cavanagh and Clarice Cavanagh for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on June 21, 1980 at one o'clock in the afternoon at their home in Royal Cureza on Highway 74.

Why did you come to that area?

BC: To this area?

PY: Indian Wells area.

BC: Well . . .

CC: He decided to go out and vote.

BC: Yes. I was going to, I was just out of high school shortly. I don't know how long. Must have been a couple of years, or a year because, well, either that or I was a slow learner and didn't graduate until 1920 because when did I come down here, 1921?



PY: You said you started the house in 1922.

BC: I did, about then. When we lived, when I say we, at this time it was my brother and myself. My brother came up from Mexico. He had gone down there a year or two before. My dad, father, and . . .

CC: Well, you came down here, but you had some relatives, you had some big property here in school, worked in Los Angeles, and he wanted Bert to come down. And so he came down here to see what it was and he lived then on the Cook Ranch and worked for them, for Mr. Cook.

E.  
BC: ~~R~~aleb /Cook.

CC: And then gradually bought property across the creek for himself, and planted it. Then his brother came and they lived together and called themselves the Cavanagh brothers.

BC: Well, he came. He came before we decided to buy. Then we started buying it together. Cook had bought or homesteaded or designated this quarter section, the two-story adobe being the northwest corner of the quarter section land that he bought. He split it up into ten-acre tracts and we bought two of them. I said we bought them, we put some money down and paid for them on contract over a period of time at, well, I guess it was a hundred



dollars an acre for the land and a hundred dollars an acre for water. It's gone up since then.

PY: Where was the water coming from?

BC: Well.

PY: On Cook's property?

BC: No, on our own property. He drilled the, Cook drilled the well, had the well drilled, and then whatever acreage it was, I don't know now, share the water, maybe forty acres, shared the water. The well went bad after awhile. It was drilled by Chapin, a Mr. Chapin who had a quarter acre, I mean a quarter section of land, north of there. And he had built this, he was quite a mechanic of sorts and he had built this well rig of bed springs and scape lens and all kinds of stuff and it had an old engine on it and one of his sons, they lived there, and one of his sons established this garage in Indio, Chapin's Garage. It's still there.

PY: Oh, Ernie Chapin is his son.

BC: Yes. He was the old man's son.

CC: Well, how did you and Al happen to decide to separate? Were you from the first, did you buy the two parcels of land, one for each of you? You built that house there.

BC: We bought it as a twenty-acre tract . . .



CC: And then you built the house just for yourselves?

BC: Yes.

CC: Then Al met a girl who was teaching school.

BC: Schoolteacher.

CC: Yes, and they were married and so they took the house,  
two-story. When was that house completed?

BC: Just recently.

CC: No, I mean the two-story.

BC: Just recently.

CC: No, I don't mean that.

BC: Well, it was, I don't know, it was a long time. They  
lived in it and kept working on it.

CC: Well, it was all finished before we were married.

BC: Well.

CC: In 1931.

BC: Not that far along.

PY: Was that about 1928 it was finished?

BC: Pardon?

PY: No.

CC: Yes.

PY: About 1928 do you think it was finished? Now that was  
an adobe house. Were the bricks made on the site?

BC: Yes. And the adobe came from lower in <sup>the</sup> Valley. There



wasn't any adobe on the, no, that adobe came from the Pederson Ranch on Washington Street just off 111. We hauled it up and made the adobe there at the ranch.

PY: Why did you go all the way down to the Pederson spread?

BC: For adobe?

PY: Yes.

BC: Because that was about as close as it was except down at the Pine Water River bed. We didn't have, there's no adobe in Indian Wells unless it's from the white water sand.

PY: When you built the last adobe you were in, where did you get that adobe from?

BC: That came from Indio, from a ranch in Indio, when they had a very heavy spot of soil. He wanted to get rid of it and we wanted it, so we hauled it up and made the adobe.

CC: Well, did you just have the straw on the place?

BC: I don't remember where the straw came from for the first adobe, but the second one we bought and bailed flax straw from the man in Beaumont that had raised it. And that was some very good, tough fiber to put in the adobe.

CC: In this house in Indio, all through the walls were



these tiny, tiny little shells, just thousands of them.

BC: Those were the ones from Indio. With little pieces of straw sticking out.

PY: You were telling me a little earlier about actually how they made the brick.

CC: Well, I was saying that the Mexicans worked this straw in with their feet. That's the way I understood

BC: They made a basin, with this adobe soil, this dry adobe soil with a crate or hole in it, put the straw in it and put water, fill it with water. And then when it softened up, they'd go in there with their feet and mix the straw and when they'd hit a clod, they'd break it up and kept working it until it was the right consistency. And then there was a form, a wood form, that they poured the mud into and it was stiff. And they worked it down with their hands so all the corners were full. And then they would lift the form off right away. It was thick enough to stand. And they'd let it stand for, oh, several days, just that way flat. And they'd turn it up on edge and put them in sort of a herringbone pattern and it would dry then from both sides. And after it was dried it was stacked. And good adobe brick would have a ring to it like a tile. You'd



have your knuckle, it had a certain ring to it. It wasn't just like a pile of mud.

CC: It's really hard. It depends, doesn't it, on the quality of the mud that's mixed in the adobe?

BC: Yes. A certain amount of sand is good in the adobe.

It keeps it from being too brittle. My house has been through a number of earthquakes that haven't really had any effect upon it.

CC: When they put in, you know, bring in all the laws regarding adobe, these two adobe houses that were built there on the ranch have stood up better than almost any house that was built.

BC: Without / any of the modern requirements, reinforced concrete, bondings, no steelings.

CC: The floor of that two-story adobe was cement and it was as smooth as glass. And then they had put the color in it that was like tile. It looked like old leather with the wax finish. It just shone. It was a beautiful, beautiful floor.

BC: Pottery jars were used for the color. I mean to get the color we wanted, and it was a little variation. It wasn't just like a paint job. It was a variation, darker and lighter, due to the mixing of the color in it.



PY: But you didn't use the pottery jar itself in the

CC: No.

BC: No. Just to get the color.

CC: It was the prettiest floor I've ever seen.

PY: Now it was actually marked, wasn't it, to look like  
tile? Was it just one slab?

BC: No, I don't recall. I think it must be marked off.  
It wasn't in small squares. It was larger squares.

PY: Yes.

BC: Then we used paste wax on it which built/<sup>it</sup>up and really  
gave it a luster and patina.

PY: Now those walls were how thick?

BC: The lower part, the first story was eighteen inches  
thick, and then the second story was probably  
and we put a tile roof on it later, about a year.

CC: Is it still a tile roof?

BC: It was built for tile roof. Wynn took his off. That  
was the second adobe that we built. That was the one  
that was built just before we got married.

PY: And was that also eighteen inches thick, the walls on  
the second . . .

BC: Twenty.

PY: Why did you decrease the thickness?



BC: Well, the eighteen inch wall was to support the higher wall. And the twelve inches would have been a good, solid, substantial wall for a single-story building.

CC: One nice thing about adobe, because the walls are thick, you can have a recessed window ledge, and I think that's so pretty.

PY: It's beautiful.

BC: This has nothing to do with the subject at hand, but that house, well, I don't know what the first one cost, three of four thousand dollars, and the second one that we lived in when we were married was about eighty-five hundred or nine thousand dollars. And then the first house after that was built. And one that we sold two or three years ago cost about thirty thousand dollars, carpet and drape. And the first part of this house cost thirty thousand dollars, carpet and drape. And the bedroom addition cost thirty thousand dollars, carpeted and draped. No, it cost more than that, actually. But you start in with a seventeen hundred, well, it was more than that because of the guest room and garage. So a twenty-two hundred square foot house for thirty thousand dollars, and then we built this one. Costs were a lot higher then, thirty thousand dollars. And then to build



the bedroom and bath for thirty-five thousand dollars.

CC: Wonder what it will be in the next ten years.

PY: Hopefully you won't have to add on. (laughter)

CC: No, that's true.

PY: The fireplace, I understand that you didn't use the . . .

CC: The measurements and the design.

PY: The design of the fireplace in this house because the Swedish man who made the fireplace.

BC: Henry Neilsen.

CC: Henry Neilsen designed and built the fireplace in the ~~Ad~~dlum's, the ~~Ad~~dlum Ranch.

BC: Well, wait a minute. He didn't. He rebuilt it because it wouldn't work.

CC: Well, I'm sorry. And he did want them to see what he was doing, he didn't want them in there until it was all finished. And it was a very big room and they were, when it was all finished, going to have a big party, and they did. Everything worked fine. Everything was ready, I guess, when they built the fire, it was so hot in there. They kept moving back, moving back, all morning long. (laughter) And they were hoping, you know, it would give some warmth in the room, and it practically set the room afire it was so hot.



BC: Yes, the bench was right up against the fireplace.

PY: What was the secret to this fireplace?

BC: Just the construction. There was really no secret about it. He built thousands of them here. And just the construction, he knew how to build them.

PY: Was there stone around that fireplace in the two-story building?

BC: No, it wasn't.

CC: Flint stone.

BC: Was it?

CC: The hearth was on the floor.

BC: Yes.

CC: And it was all stone.

BC: Wonder where that came from. The second one we built, where we lived back when we were married, the stone came from the All American Canal dump before they added on the canal. We hauled it over and used that. And this stone came from the ground right here, from the excavation we made from the bedrooms downstairs. Seems that there should be an easier way to get at what you want than this.



PY: You're giving me the information that I want. No one else really remembers much about building of adobe around here and it's not of interest to them. And so this is information that no one else has given.

BC: At La Quinta when they built the first increment at La Quinta, it was all built in adobe. And they used a lime cement mortar for putting the adobe bricks together, and it didn't work because the coefficient of expansion between the adobe and the lime cement was not the same. And it left little openings, cracks, in it.

CC: What was used?

BC: Just a mud, the same thing that bricks were made of.

CC: Well, did La Quinta then take it down and rebuild?

BC: No.

CC: Is it still like that?

BC: I think they plastered over most of it.

CC: Because that was a beautiful building at La Quinta.

BC: I think they plastered over it.

PY: Which reminds me, you were telling me about the second house, the one-story one, and you were saying that you didn't plaster inside. It was just washed with water. And it had a nice color to it.

CC: Soft, soft pearl gray.



BC: But we painted that, though, Honey. We used a paint that was just about adobe color, clay, they called it.

CC: We did?

BC: Yes.

CC: Was it different than the color of the . . .

BC: Not much, not much.

CC: How was it that you never, that you couldn't tell that it was ever painted. It was always coming off like dust later, years later, like the walls.

BC: No, oh, that was the single-story adobe.

CC: Yes.

BC: No. That was not painted inside.

CC: That's what she was talking about.

BC: We used Thompson water seal on it, I think. Maybe, nothing. Then the second one, single-story adobe, the last one we had where the living room . . .

CC: Oh, I know that.

BC: That was painted.

CC: Yes. But the other one wasn't.

PY: Why was it painted after the success of that single-story one? I was curious why you painted the next one.

CC: It was a very different house, really. It was so light, you know, a lot of the walls in the house was glass and



I really don't know why. Perhaps partly because in the adobe with nothing on it but washed with water would shed a little dust, you know, off the adobe. Maybe that was why. It certainly didn't amount to anything that I was aware of.

BC: There was a little bit of alkaline in some of that.

Remember, and those were the places where it kept dusting off. The alkaline would build up and you'd brush it off.

PY: You were saying earlier, Mrs. Cavanagh, someone had painted the . . .

2. CC: Oh, Wynn, when Wynn the house down here, and he bought that. And he was then manager of Santa Anita and he had a paint crew. And as soon as he bought it he brought up the paint crew and sprayed all the walls and the ceilings and, you know, just changed the main character.

PY: Who painted the ceiling before?

CC: Bert Woodhouse. He was the second one. It had a beautiful ceiling and Anderson in Rancho Mirage did that. Swede, no Danish, and that, too, was a beautiful ceiling.

PY: And are these all wood ceilings?

CC: Yes.



PY: Do you remember where the beams came from? We went through that once before it seems to me.

BC: Pardon?

PY: The beams. Where they came from.

BC: The beams?

PY: Yes. Were they local?

BC: In the two-story adobe? Well, they came through a local lumber yard. No, they came from up north someplace. They were fir, twelve by twelve fir beams. I think maybe they were hand matched after that. They twisted a little and opened up which made them all the more important.

PY: And then the other two houses?

BC: The second house, we had truss construction with two by six sheeting on top that was the ceiling of the room. And the last one was just heavy rafters, no trusses.

CC: You know adobe, we were speaking earlier about adobe being cool and also warm, but unless adobe has a well-insulated ceiling or some air conditioning, gradually that big brick heats up and the house becomes an oven because it doesn't cool off at night either. And so there are advantages and disadvantages. And the cold is also the same way. That, if it's a very cold winter and gradually and there's no other heat, eventually it



gets colder and colder and it's a refrigerator. (laughter)

But with air conditioning, there's just nothing like it.

PY: You didn't have air conditioning in the first one.

BC: No.

CC: When I came here, they hadn't even invented the evaporative cooler.

PY: Was it hot in here?

CC: Well, it was the second house we built an outside stairway going up onto a flat roof over the garage. And the roof was pitched, and we had pushed in against that beds. And then the foot of the beds formed a complete seal against so when they were shut it was a part of that wall there against the house. Then you pulled those out at night and that's where we slept.

BC: They were on tracks, they slid on tracks. And this was under the gable of the house, not under the garage. The flat area was the roof of the garage and the rest of it was the gable and this tile roof.

CC: So we'd come up out of the bedroom and go outstairs to the porch.

BC: The peak was only about that high and it sloped down, just room enough to make a place in there for the beds.

CC: I remember having fun when I came down here, people



saying you can leave by moonlight. I remember I tried it and you really could. (laughter) Get close enough to the moon. Eyes were good in those days.

PY: Just one other question in regard to your home, the third one that you built. You said that your construction had to be different. Could you just briefly go over what that difference was?

BC: The adobe part. We were told this time, this was the first time we'd had experience with the County Claim Commissioner Building Department and we were told that when we took our plans through that we could not build a free-standing adobe wall, that it had to have concrete, reinforced concrete pilasters and bonding. I said, no, we won't do it that way, so it stood there for quite awhile and finally he said, you can do veneer, build veneer, and I thought by veneer he meant just a thin layer of adobe there, and well, that wouldn't work. And we talked further and he said, well, you can just lay up a normal adobe wall inside of your stud wall and that would satisfy everybody, and that's what we did. We built the stud wall first, and that later was stuccoed on the outside and on the inside we put the building paper. And so we had something to lay the blocks to



We could just lay them up against this stud wall and run a straight line. Otherwise, we would have used a chalk line or something to keep it straight. So it was a convenience in one way. Of course, it cost more, too. It was convenient and gave us an initial four inches of air space in there for insulation on the outside of the wall. And the inside was left adobe. So we overcame the objections the Planning Commission gave and what they wanted and we got what we wanted.

PY: Did Joe Valenzuela make the tile for all of these?

BC: Joe Valenzuela made, no, he made the tile for the first one, the two-story building, and the second one came from Sunset Tile when Joe wasn't here then.

PY: Well, by the time you built the house, the first one-story?

BC: The one we moved into when we were married.

PY: Then he must have come back.

BC: No. I don't remember whether he came back after that or not. The first one, he made the tile in La Quinta. He had tile cut over there and he made the tile in La Quinta. And whether this is fact or fiction, I don't recall, but this story has been told so many times, you take it for fact, he shaped the tile over his leg.



He had shapely legs (laughter) If they shaped it over mine, it would look like a piece of two inch pipe.

(laughter)

PY: That was funny. Can you describe the area of Indian Wells in the twenties and then in the thirties? Who was living here, what it was like to be living here.

BC: In the twenties, as I recall, the only developed going property was the property of Caleb E. Cook. And the area in Palm Desert that is about where Angelopes was, about where the Sunshine Fish, Meat and Liquor was, had been developed and the land had been leveled, maybe a hundred and sixty acres, maybe more, maybe less. On the north side of the road a big good well developed and the reservoir for water, that you pump the water into, had been developed. And the fellow Thomas of Coachella had planted beans in there in the spring, and the winds came and blew his crop out and I guess he, that finished him, both emotionally and physically. And the place was abandoned for many years after that. And Frank Simpson, about that time, had bought the property that goes down from Palmyrus Road to Eldorado Drive, a hundred and sixty acres, and was gradually developing it to grapes. Frank Simpson was the owner of



the Savoy Hotel in Los Angeles. And he used to come to Cook for information about developing and planting and so on. But this was later. He had started the place later than Cook; but Cook, as I recall, was the only sign of habitation in the area from Washington Street to Palm Springs. There may have been someone else, I don't know. But then after that in about where, well, it's where this Harman lived, the fellow who was a whittler. They tore down the building within the last four or five years. It was an adobe house, an adobe house that Frank Lawrence and his wife had built. And the only Indian well and the county well were right in that area. And there was a frame structure there with these porches all the way around that they used as screen porches for sleeping. And a fellow by the name of Frank Wilson lived there and he did outside work, team work with mules and so on in different ranches close by there. And then Harmans had a place back where the Indian Wells Country Club clubhouse is. He didn't live there then.

CC: When was that?

BC: I don't know. Harman, I think, was there before I came or had owned the property, the father had, had owned the property.



CC: Well, when I came down Simpson's vineyard was well established.

BC: Well, that was in 1930.

CC: Well, that was in the thirties.

PY: How early was Lawrence, Frank Lawrence?

BC: How what?

PY: How early was Frank Lawrence?

BC: Well, it must have been in the thirties, last twenties and thirties. His father-in-law, Greer, had been a landowner in there in that area. Then there was a one-room school where Bray's art place is.

PY: When did the store and post office go in? Was that the thirties?

BC: No, I think that was there when I came, about the same time. And that was the early twenties. That's where the big tamus are, just the other side of Bray's. That was run by, it was owned and operated, the store was, and the post office was operated by Luella Boland<sup>denow</sup>. And she was the mother of Mrs. Shepherd who had the jewelry store in Indio. And, well, Luella Boland<sup>denow</sup> registered me to vote in 1921. When was I twenty-one? In 1922. So they were in operation in at least 1920. That land was all under easement for flooding where the



present highway goes through the cut at Point Happy in the east side of Indian Wells was a cut for the spillway for the water flooded. They were going to dam it up from Deep Canyon and then it would go through that spillway.

PY: Was the road going through there as well at that time? So it was just the road being flooded every year.

BC: The road had previously gone back in where Balboa Bay Club is or in that area and came out and went through the cut. There was a fellow in near where Frank Wilson lived by the name of Bob Blair that had a place. I don't remember what he did there, but there was a fellow living there. And I guess working for him. He was a well driller. And a fellow living there or working for him by the name of Scotty Fry who had been a mule skinner over in Anza Country on the big mule team

PY: Were these people there year around then and was that a permanent place of residence or were these just? . . . .

BC: As far as I remember, yes. There were cottages in by the store. A number of little cottages where people came to stay, but mostly in the wintertime. And then just at where the cut is made through the rocks on the east side of the city of Indian Wells there was a ranch



where the development is along Washington Street, all the little houses along the road there. But the ranch was developed by a fellow by the name of Longacre who had two sons, and I think a daughter. And there was a man, and I don't recall his name, that was living there on the ranch with them. And in the middle of the summer he was bitten or stung by vinegarroon and he had chills to such an extent that he put all the blankets he had, in the middle of summer there was no cooling, and was just shaking himself to pieces until he got over it.

PY: What's a vinegarroon?

BC: Well, it's a repulsive looking thing with a split head. Maybe they don't even buy it, I don't know, but that's the story that I got.

CC: Oh, yes they do. It is a spider-like/ <sup>thing</sup> with a double head. Hairy.

PY: Like a tarantula?

CC: No.

BC: It may have been a/ <sup>black</sup> widow spider vinegarroon.

PY: Most of the people in the area, were they ranching, farming?



BC: Yes.

PY: What did they have under cultivation?

BC: Cotton, alfalfa, some dates starting, some few figs.

CC: Any grapes?

BC: Not commercially, I don't believe.

PY: Many dates?

BC: Dates? Not in that area particularly. There were some  
cookless planting dates.

CC: But all during the twenties, it wasn't so because much  
of that wasn't planted when I came in 1930.

BC: You didn't come until the late twenties.

CC: I came in 1931, but it couldn't have all happened in  
the thirties.

BC: Well, it was probably in the late twenties, early  
thirties.

CC: When did Bob Cook start to develop?

BC: Who?

CC: Bob.

BC: Bob Cook? Not nearly developed. Bill?

CC: Bob, Bob Webb..

BC: Webb?

CC: Yes.

BC: Oh, it must have been . . .



CC: That was planted when I came.

BC: Well, then it was probably 1924 or 1925.

PY: Was Cook then the reason why most people were moving out to that area?

BC: What?

PY: Was Cook the reason the people were moving in?

BC: Well, he started development there. And I think it was awful slow at the beginning. That was about the extent of it. And I don't remember, the only ranch just to the west of us, the Krutz Ranch, was developed by a fellow by the name of Thomas S. Krutz. Cook did the development work for him. But the place was an eighty-acre place that was planted with dates, many dates on it, not entirely. Dates, some alfalfa, but that must have been in the twenties.

PY: Who was purchasing the acreage that Cook had subdivided outside 111?

BC: Oh, on the south side where we were?

PY: Yes, on the south side where you were.

BC: Well, Bob Land purchased twenty acres north of, south of us. A fellow from Escondido, an employee in Standard Oil Company, developed some. A. J. Shamley who was the head of the U. S. Date Garden developed a piece.



Robert Murphy, an attorney in Los Angeles, developed a piece. We developed it for him, but he owned it. And Bert Ripple, the son of the shoe manufacturer in Milwaukee, developed ten acres. No, he bought O. B. Hansen's, the fellow from Escondido. And John Beck developed twenty acres. He was from Milwaukee. This must have been the late twenties they started doing this. And then Early Stein, who was a merchant in Indio, started developing the place. And Mann and Simon started developing the place that is now El Dorado Country Club. And then after that Farmer Page bought the property from them. Farmer Page was one of the owners of the Pioneer Club in Las Vegas.

CC: Well, after it started it had nothing to do really with Mr. Cook. People, one tracted another of the . . .

BC: Well, yes, yes.

PY: How were they sure about it, I mean, why would they even think about purchasing property in that area?

CC: School teachers.

BC: Well, school teachers, a lot of it on the north side of the highway, they developed that property into a subdivision, part of it, in very small one-acre tracts that were thirty-two or three feet wide and six hundred



feet long. And sell it to school teachers. Not just singly, but they'd buy one, two, four or five or six of these things and put them together, and he took care of them. I was working for him and he took care of the property. But mostly at this end an attorney, mostly school teachers, an attorney and, oh, a few other people.

CC: From the city.

PY: How did you know about it?

CC: Well, one would come and then they'd come with their friends.

BC: Well, Cook came from Los Angeles, too, and he was from the electrical contracting business in there and he knew some of these people.

CC: Well, Avis didn't know Cook, did he?

BC: I think he knew Westcott, Cook and Westcott.

CC: Well, that's the way, see, one knew another.

BC: Eventually, word gets around and they always went to school teachers and doctors, wanted to invest in something about which they know nothing. And that's the way that started. And it was kind of struggle for them to hold on to it for a long time.

PY: Did most of them eventually sell out?

BC: Yes.



CC: When was the storm drain put in back then?

BC: 1928, I think, 1929. I had all the records and I turned them over to Don Mitchell.

CC: We were the first number one telephone owner.

PY: Oh, tell me about that. That must have been interesting. Bob Cook had told me that early, like 1919 or something, they were running wire on anything they could find, you know, to get telephone service out there.

CC: Well, it didn't come out there until the early thirties.

BC: We had to contribute capital for building the line.

PY: And that was the Thermal Phone Company?

BC: Yes. The Teledyne Telephone and Telegraph--Billy Newman. He went around with a black satchel after they got the pay phones, little black satchel collect the money. And once in awhile he'd get a washer and he'd just stand in one place and jump up and down.

PY: Hear more stories about Henry in regards to his pay phones. (laughter) I think he'll always be known for his collecting the pay phones himself. (laughter)

BC: His son went on to be one of the important officials in General Telephone, and his Daughter, we saw his daughter not too long ago, a couple of years ago, down at Mitchell's fiftieth anniversary.



CC: You were wondering, you were asking how these people heard or how they happened to come down here. In the early days there was some very different, sort of a swashbuckling, interesting group of young men came to the valley. They were a race apart. They had a wonderful time together, you know, the things they do. Bert's closest friend then was Ray Wilson who had graduated from Pomona and he came down there. And they all kind of attracted one another and I heard about them through some young woman working in the bank. You never saw such a group of men. They were just the most fascinating men you ever met. Young fellows, the things they'd do together and the way they lived with fun they had.

PY: Describe it.

CC: Well, I don't know how to describe it. It was their fun and their ways were just day and night to what they are.

PY: What would you do together?

BC: What?

PY: What would you do together?

BC: You work like the dickens all week, and then, for example, on the Sunday often we would hike either from where . . . what?



CC: I wasn't thinking about those.

BC: From where the bridges are, down at the bottom of the grade, up into this area and back. Just exercise after working all week. And then . . .

CC: But there artists, they were young men, many of them who had come from the East. Maybe they had come from very old established homes and they had many interesting and varied backgrounds to do different types of things. They may like to cook or they, and the way they entertained and the kind of free for all fun they had. It went with the sort of pioneer life they were living, too.

BC: Made a little home brew once in awhile.

PY: Really?

BC: What was I saying?

PY: Ray Wilson homesteaded in the adobe.

BC: Well, the adobe houses, that is just south of the Adobe Restaurant.

CC: Hotel.

BC: You wouldn't know that it was just a little shack.

What did I say, it was adobe?

CC: No.

BC: No, it wasn't adobe. It wasn't adobe. It was frame, but he built an adobe fireplace in the middle of wintertime.



CC: Well, the house is still there.

BC: Gaping hole in the side of the house, and we gave him an oil stove, coal oil, you wouldn't remember this unless your great grandfather had told somebody about it.

They have these coal oil stoves, sit about that high, about counter height and they had burners, two, three, four burners with a wick and kerosene and a stack like that. All the cooking was done, all of our cooking was done. We gave Mr. Ray, when we outgrew it and got something else, and I think we, this is when my brother and I were together down here, and Ray took it up and that was his way of cooking food. He was baching in this place. And I told I think most of this because I told you everything I knew and could think of at the time, but we were in it, this gets away from me, this historical background, it tells something about, Clarice mentioned the people and Ray remodeled the house. And he was a carpenter, and a good one.

CC: How did he learn carpentry right out of Pomona?

BC: Well, I guess playing football. He built our house we lived in when we were married, just after we were married. He was the head of construction and was a very good carpenter. Then he remodeled this house in Palm Springs



for a Chicago widow, Hazel Brophy, and reputed to be quite well to do. And he ended up by marrying her and we were spending a weekend with them in Belair one time in their very delightful home. And we were having breakfast, being served by the butler, and I was telling Hazel about Ray and his coffee. The butler / was bringing them the coffee and after I tried it, I said, the best coffee I ever had in my life Ray made when he was baching down on the desert. And he would put the coffee on and let the pot to boil over this oil stove, kerosene stove. And the coffee would boil up and clear up. And he'd set it back and let it go down. And when it settled down again, he'd put it on again and until it boiled up and boiled over and put the fire out. Then it was ready to drink. So I told Hazel it was the best coffee I'd ever had. She said, she didn't think that was funny at all. (laughter)

CC: That part was Ray's life.

BC: Oh, Ray was a delightful fellow. He was a football hero in Pomona. Really on the top.

PY: What did he have on that hundred and sixty acres?

BC: What did he have?

PY: Yes.



BC: Just a house.

PY: Oh, nothing more. (laughter)

BC: No, when Cliff started developing, he turned it in somehow and he retained, not only did he turn it over and retained every other lot, and I think he felt no pain. But then he didn't have to be afraid of pain because Hazel could always smooth that out and soothe it. And one thing he used to say was that he would like to have enough and he never would have the way he was going because he spent it faster than he made it. He'd like to have enough to be able to enjoy the arts and he did. He ended up . . .

CC: That's what I . . . they were all different and they were close and they were interesting and they led interesting free sort of lives, you know.

BC: Lee Miller was one of the fellows we used to see occasionally that built some houses in the mouth of Palm Canyon at Arabie with dirt roads, regular Mexican houses. He was a colorful swashbuckler, and I don't know who all was.

PY: Where did you all meet?

CC: What about the young, you and these two other people bought the land out in the middle of the desert out there.



BC: Five Ways? There were five bought this Chapin ranch for fifteen hundred dollars. We borrowed the money from, there was a fellow by the name of Girard, a handsome young fellow, came from Arizona, I think, and he borrowed the money from his mother to pay for it. And the five of us had that three hundred dollar equity in it, supposedly. And we were told, I was told, that there was a liability there, that if the rest didn't pay and we were the only ones that held on, had the money, that we would have to pay off the entire obligation. So we quitclaimed to Girard and Frank Rogers, another fellow did, and they finally sold the place, a hundred and sixty acres, to Howard Miller, who was secretary of the Agricultural Division of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. And they sold it to him for twenty-five hundred dollars, so somebody made something. And we were paying back our three hundred dollars. And then after a number of years . . .

PY: Where was this property?

BC: Well, you know where 44 crosses the White Water, well, it was just after, going toward Indio, just after you pull out of the thing on that side, and there used to be an enormous big <sup>tamarisk</sup> ~~tamus~~ tree out there, and John Beck



has a story he can tell you about the <sup>tamarisk</sup>~~tamus~~ tree,  
but . . .

CC: What was all that, a dune?

BC: Yes, back of it, but there was a little piece of flat  
land right next to the wash in there that was marvelous  
soil. And they raised strawberries in there. You could  
throw them all over anywhere, beautiful. But what  
direction was I headed for?

CC: Well, you were talking about the five way.

BC: Well, there was Girard and Frank Rogers and Jack Walker.

CC: Well, who did they finally sell to? You said that they  
sold it to Miller and then . . .

BC: There was somebody, there were five. Myself and Nelson  
Painter, Nelson Painter. But Miller kept it for, I  
don't know, paid twenty-five hundred dollars for it and  
kept it for probably fifteen years, seventeen years,  
twenty years, and he sold it to the fellow who has  
a wooden shoe ranch, Bernard Vanderstein for two hundred  
and fifty-nine thousand dollars. (chuckle) We were  
buying eighty acres of land down where the College of  
the Desert is. And I guess I told you this, and I  
decided that I was going to try for matrimony and I had  
approached Clarice. And when she finally knuckled under,



I couldn't have her and the ranch, too. So I had six hundred dollars in that and I just let it go. I defaulted on it. And it's been a wonderful thing for me. But I learned my lesson there.

CC: (laughter) You learned something.

BC: Don't speculate in land when there's something better.

CC: (laughter)

BC: But that's worth more than that now.

CC: You let the College in the Desert.

PY: Did that later become part of the Odell Ranch?

BC: The what?

PY: Did it later become part of the O'dell Ranch? Or did it become the area covered by COD?

BC: Let's see. It may have been. I don't remember. Because this was quite awhile before O'dell came in. And Charlie McCarthy owned that. Charlie, who was, Bergen.

CC: Bergen.

PY: Edgar Bergen.

BC: Edgar Bergen.

CC: Edgar Bergen.

BC: Wasn't Charlie his . . .

PY: You never know who was in charge. It might have been Charlie. (laughter)



BC: Oh, there was a lot of good, clean, simple fun then.

We'd go on occasions in the summertime in the evenings, Saturday evenings we'd go down to Salt and Sea for a swim. And it was the only body of water large enough to get in and dunk in then. And we'd wade out about half a mile to get in water deep enough to get your chin wet. And salt would stick all over you. You'd get home and usually we wouldn't even shower. When we got home we were too bushed and go to bed and you'd stick to the bed with salt on you. And you'd wear it off during the week.

PY: It doesn't sound like you took too many baths.

CC: What about the stories you've told me about taking a shower every day from a tank up above and go out in back? Wasn't that the story when you were working for Mr. Cook?

BC: Well, there was a tank, we lived in this tank house, and it was eight by and two stories high with a big water tank on top of it, and then we had a little shower outside, just a grapevine and three walls around it and the other fourth wall was a house.

PY: Oh, so you just had some means of allowing the water to come . . .



BC: Well, it came out of the tank but there was a shower head, such as they were at that time, above us. But I think what you're thinking of was when they made the part of that film on Indian Wells Ranch. And they made me a criminal with John Garfield and Gloria Dixon and somebody else and all those people. The Deadend Kids. But they up in the shed, they had put a tin can up there and punched holes in the bottom of it and poured water in and they'd shower just for the ducks.

PY: Indian Wells Ranch. Which was that?

BC: That's where we lived when we were married.

PY: Was the one that Wilson took over.

BC: Yes, Glen Wilson. Glen Wilson and H. O. Davis.

PY: Did Davis have the two-story?

BC: Yes.

PY: And then you had built another house out in back, foreman's house, was that it?

BC: Yes. They did, a frame house. Wynn built that Wilson.

CC: Well, we built the adobe.

BC: Yes, but then he built a little house in back of the shed.

CC: Oh, that one in back of the shed. Yes, we built the house . . .

BC: For the ranch foreman.



PY: Yes, Bade Bowie, Slim and Faye Bowie lived in there.

BC: Yes. And that's why he built this other house for the ranchmen because they were living in the adobe. Well, there are things of great importance.

CC: Historically.

BC: Historically.

PY: I know. That's sad. No one could try too much with historical.

CC: What was the name of the man who did the surveying? Day? Percy Day? You never mentioned him.

BC: He was one of the early men that lived in a tent. He came from San Diego and he lived on the west side of Palm Marris Drive and his ranch came down to 111. He had ten acres, one of the ten-acre tracts that Cook had sold and was a licensed lancer there. He was a colorful fellow. He was older than the rest of them, and he had my brother and myself stay in his tent over a weekend because he had very valuable surveying instruments in there. And there wasn't the thievery and the pilferage going on then as there is now. But anyway he wanted somebody to stay in his tent. And this was the wintertime and we stayed in there, and it was about ten degrees colder in there than it was outside. Oh, it was miserable!



And in the summertime it was just about twenty degrees hotter than it is . . .

CC: How long was he gone? How long was he away?

BC: Well, at least one night I know, maybe longer. We had a fire going and a kerosene stove.

CC: I thought he was a very interesting man.

BC: Yes, he was and he was a pretty intelligent sort of a fellow. They were surveying one time. He had a crew. Shorty, a little Frenchman and somebody else, and Percy. And they were coming in from out where by Paul Kersten lived, out at Lake Mirage, at night, in the summertime, in the evening, and they were just dragging one after the other, in single file, about twenty feet apart. And Shorty, the Frenchman, was in the rear. And they came walking along and just barely able to make it. And he stopped and turned around, and he thought he had seen something that looked like a coin of some kind. So he went back and they found whatever it was, two hundred and some dollars in gold pieces. Coins, and the most recent one was 1896 or 1895 or 1894 or something. And the only evidence they found of anything was part of the waistband of a pair of levis. Maybe a short piece with one button on. And they went back and when they found



that, they all decided they weren't tired and they started looking and scratching and they got what they could. I don't remember what it was, but in those days, I mean now convert that into gold at six hundred dollars an ounce.

CC: Well, did they ever find out what happened to the man? Was he murdered or . . .

BC: No, I don't think they knew. I don't know how they tried, how much they tried. I guess they tried to in a quiet sort of a way, but they couldn't. Then they came along and conviscated it. Now the federal government say, no, you can't use that. It's illegal.

CC: Did you ever tell Pat about the development of the Arkell Ranch?

BC: No.

PY: I was going to ask about that. We didn't talk about it yet.

CC: They came about the time we were married. And I have a picture of Ray, one of his friends, Ray Wilson, built their house, too, up there on the dune.

BC: Ray Wilson and Ernie

CC: Yes, and . . .



BC: You'll have to speak up if you want to be recorded for posterity.

CC: I know. But I was thinking, that was such a colorful part of that area, the Arkell life and certainly was woven into the warp and/woof of ours because they were such a part of that family for several years.

PY: How did they influence the area?

CC: Well, they were such colorful people. They came, he had been a mining engineer in . . .

BC: Before that he was out of the Artell family in New York, the developers of the Beech-Nut, the early Beech-Nut products. Baby food came later, but it was life savers and one thing and another, gum.

CC: It was bacon and all . . .

BC: Bacon, yes. . . .

CC: Everything Beech-Nut. But he was

BC: In Cuba.

CC: Mexico first.

BC: I think it was Cuba. Administrator for, yes, for the interest, the Warner interest in Cuba.

CC: And she was from Colorado.

BC: Montana.

CC: No.



BC: Colorado?

CC: Colorado. And they were married. I guess she, yes, she was in Cuba and then they went to Mexico. He was down in Zapatagus and then they came up here and bought this ranch. And I don't know anybody who could do Claire and Jim justice. He looked very much like, very much like Will Rogers. Always mistake him for him in appearance. And she was . . .

BC: Kind of whiskey tenor voice.

CC: Deep, she smoked so much she had kind of a deep voice. But their whole life pattern was part of the area. She, they had a whole house full of servants and Mexicans nearly everywhere. And she talked Mexican like a native and was ordering everybody around. And it was a big house and always loaded with company either staying indefinitely or guests coming to dinner.

BC: That's where we met Alice and Orville.

PY: What was the name of the home?

CC: The Casa de Esperanza, house of bad luck. The daughter was drowned. in Cuba. Her son / <sup>wanted</sup> his own airplane. He got it down here and we were with them watching him flying and he went down and was killed.

BC: I was up with him a couple of weeks before.



PY: I understand that Fidel Castro's father had been foreman or something for the plantation in Cuba. Were you aware of that?

BC: Fidel Castro's father had been wanted for what?

PY: Foreman.

CC: Foreman of the Arkell, of the Warner property. Where did that come from?

BC: Oh.

PY: I think Anne Carpenter may have told me that.

BC: I never heard that.

CC: Did she know the Arkells?

PY: Yes.

BC: Anne Carpenter. I don't remember.

PY: I know she had been there. I don't know how well she knew him. I may not have gotten it from her. Someone told me that very early on when I was just becoming, you know, acquainted with various places in the area.

BC: I know somebody who would know, if you could catch him when he can talk, and that would be Jose Rovarte or Manuel somebody. They used to call him Green.

CC: How would Jose know?

BC: Well, he worked on the ranch. He worked for Art Cavanagh<sup>u</sup> for . . .



CC: But this was in Cuba that Castro's father managed the  
plantation in Cuba.

BC: Oh, I don't know. I thought you were talking about  
this place.

PY: No.

BC: I don't know.

PY: I understand it's a beautiful place.

CC: They have a swimming pool out in front which is also a  
reservoir that was so big they had a sailboat on it.  
And you really spent your strength swimming across that  
pool a couple times.

BC: We had a lot of art, a lot of fine paintings.

CC: Done by Claire. This is typical of Claire. Mrs. Arkell.  
Was it a Catholic priest or an Episcopal priest came  
out, they're always trying to do something to lift the  
Arkell's, I guess, or maybe they just came out for a  
drink. And Claire didn't know anybody was there and she  
was back in the, in her bedroom and she was taking a  
bath. That was another wing of the house, the bedroom  
wing, or one of them, and the radio was on. And she  
thought it was on too loud in the living room, and she  
came out without a stitch on to change the radio and  
the living room was here and the solarium was out  
here. And here was this priest and Mr. Arkell sitting



out in the solarium and the priest was where he looked right directly where Claire was, and she let out some "oh", and retreated back. (laughter) That was some life, that place. But she had, oh, she had a heart of gold. Everybody loved her. She'd do anything for you. She was very outspoken, very much herself. And she loved beautiful things, beautiful clothes, beautiful cars, beautiful flowers and trees, everything. She lived, you know, to the enth of her capacity all the time in her way. There wasn't a false note in her. It was true to her, always true.

BC: Another person we met there was Harold Bromley. He used to stop in once in awhile, and he was a colorful fellow. He used to fly, and he flew into Mexico, I guess, on charter trips or something. And he was telling me about one trip he made down there. Somebody was very ill with plague or fever or something. He said he had a solution of something and he took a horse reins and stirred it around and took a shot of it. And pumped it into this fellow. I don't know whether he died or got well.

CC: Bromley is the one who built the building there on Paseo, the Bromley building.

BC: He bought it, didn't he?



CC: He built it.

BC: I think it was built before he bought it.

CC: I thought he built it. And he wanted Barbara, our daughter, to marry his son. (laughter)

PY: Who owned the ranch next to the Artell Ranch?

CC: Gee's or the . . .

PY: I guess that was the Gee's. The Smeads were next door neighbors.

CC: Yes.

BC: Herschel Gee. Then the Carpenters, Jean Carpenter, was one of the original owners of part of the property that Artell bought. He was another character. He raised early figs. When I was in the post office in Indio one time, small affair, and he had been married to this whatever her name was, and they were divorced. And James, I was standing there talking to Jean at one of the tables in the lobby, there was a little passageway there, and she came by. She was a big healthy buxom little person. She walked by behind us. When she walked by, she pulled his shirt tail out of his trousers and just kept going. No hard feelings.

PY: (laughter) Were the Clarks at that point at Point Happy up there?



BC: Chauncey Clark. Yes, they were there, and I don't know when. Probably in the late twenties, early thirties, for a good many years. And then after he died, they had rating horses they brought in. This fellow by the name of Carl Rozemore was their horseman who took that over and bought them and took care of them for the Clarks. And then after his death, she went to the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles for many years.

CC: That was a beautiful place.

PY: Did you know the woman <sup>Billie</sup>, Mrs. Bilakey, who built that house the Gurleys are in now?

BC: Gurleys live in?

PY: Yes, the one right next to City Hall.

BC: Yes. The house was built by Lucien Gray, an attorney in Los Angeles, and his daughter married a fellow by the name of Bellicky, one of the old families of southern California. And she lived there for quite a number of years.

PY: Was that house built in the late twenties, early thirties?

BC: It was probably built in the thirties. I don't know.

PY: Was that a going ranch then?

BC: Going ranch, yes. He planted dates and grapes in there.

PY: Did they plant mainly ~~Del~~ <sup>Englet</sup> Nones in the area?



BC: In this area down here?

PY: Yes.

BC: They were practically all <sup>E</sup>yglet Nor~~ss~~. There were <sup>Saidys</sup>~~St. Ives~~ planted. That was something that came in. Cook brought them in, and one importation in, and propogated them, sold them. But that wasn't the variety that became popular. Most of them are gone now. But they're all <sup>E</sup>yglet Nor~~ss~~ Some <sup>edjovels</sup>~~Majewels~~ now.

PY: Why had you moved from the second house which you sold to <sup>my</sup>Glen Wilson to the next place?

BC: Well, because there was nothing to do there. The place was twenty acres. It was entirely planted and there were houses on it. And we had had a very strong yearning to have another piece of property down east of there. And finally we were able to buy it.

CC: Did you tell her how you ever got that?

BC: No. Bought it.

CC: Yes, but I mean how the circumstances, how long you waited and how you happened to . . .

BC: Well, we had wanted it and we communicated with this, found out who owned it. And the First National Bank of Elsinore was selling it on contract through a fellow by the name of Hyatt. And this manager of the bank



Goff said that although Hyatt was in default they were going to go with him as long as they could because he wanted it and they thought he'd come out of it and make it all right. And finally he died and they brought suit to quiet title. And he called me, the banker called me and asked me if we were still interested. And I said, yes. And he said what they wanted for it, what was it, sixty some hundred dollars for the eighty acres. And I said it was too much. And so, he said, well, why don't you drive over and we'll talk it over. So I got over just as the bank was closing at three o'clock. And we went to a place next door, a little establishment, and had a drink and started to talk. And about nine o'clock that night we had finished talking and he had come down fifteen hundred dollars and we had come up fifty dollars. And I spent all the money I had in this little establishment. We went into the bank. He unlocked it. And I gave him the check for a thousand dollars. And I said, now this check is overdrawn for seven hundred dollars. Will you hold it for a couple of days until I can cover it? Oh, sure. He said, if you need money to get home on, I'll loan it to you. I said, well, I've got a credit card and I can make it all right. So that's the way we



bought the place. We bought it for fifty-five hundred dollars.

2 CC: The bank (laughter)

PY: When was this?

BC: Thirty.

CC: That was in, Barbara was five years old.

BC: Five years old?

CC: And it was just the week that I came back

BC: Thirty-eight, thirty-nine.

CC: from Dr. Hayn in Pocinow. That was . . .

BC: It was 1938 or 1939.

CC: Yes. 1938.

BC: I felt good about that. It was a good . . .

CC: That was a beautiful place.

BC: It was a fair price and he said, how did you arrive at the price? I said, well, there's land around us, around that area, comparatively level land for a hundred dollars an acre. And I said, it would cost quite a bit to level it to put it in that shape. So we just brought it down to that basis and we signed up and sealed the deal.

PY: Did you buy more acreage then later on?

BC: Yes, but not until sometime later. Well, I guess it



was just after, I think for the first time I'm able to tie this together because the, well, the first moneys that we had to invest, must have been when we sold the place to go in in Davis. That would be 1942 or 1943, I think, and then we bought the forty acres in the thermal area. We called it Thermal, long way because it isn't close to any town. Forty acres there that had about ten or twelve acres of grapes on that had been badly abused and neglected. And we farmed the grapes for a couple of years. It was land, that's what I was looking for. We farmed the grapes for a couple of years. And then started planting dates in them. Then the next year or two we got all the grapes and planted the ten acres with dates. And we sold that a year ago last March. And then is when we decided we had to have some land, so we bought another forty.

PY: But you never purchased any more in Indian Wells?

BC: No.

PY: Is that house still standing?

CC: Yes. They've cut down all around it. They want to preserve the house. I don't know how it is going to look, seeing it is up there on quite a high dune.

PY: Where is it?



CC: Well, you know where the Airland Hotel is, it's just west and back. And it's the only thing still standing up there, everything cut down except the house.

PY: There's a date garden in front of the house.

BC: Went through the nation see the house back here.

CC: Yes.

PY: Who owns it now?

CC: McDermott, Collin McDermott. He's developed it.

BC: He started, have pretty well under construction a new house on it. We have friends, the Brauns, that Clarice mentioned were involved with several of us in the Property Owners Association. Owned the eighty acres just west of us. And many other delightful ranch homes that was built on the property, and they tore that down. It was a delightful place.

CC: Was that one of May's houses or . . .

BC: No.

CC: Not Frank Lloyd Wright?

BC: No. I think a fellow by the name of Murphy was the architect. And Pelokowski built it.

CC: But I thought it was a May design.

BC: It's that type of thing, but I, maybe it was, I don't know.



PY: Did you ever use an architect?

BC: Pardon?

PY: Did you ever use an architect or designer?

BC: Yes. May not only initial design but on the plan.

PY: Who would you use?

CC: Himself . He never wanted any . . . (laughter)

BC: No, the first one, the house we lived in that we sold in Indian Wells recently, Gray and Chambers did the, refined the work that we had done on it. And then on this one, we had John <sup>outcalt</sup> Alpco do some work, refined our plans and do the drawing.

PY: Now you were beginning to talk about the Homeowners Property Association. Can you elaborate more on how that was formed and who was involved and how that led them to a concern with the identity of Indian Wells?

BC: Well, that must have been started about, must be started about, I think we were incorporated in 1959, so it must have been in the mid-fifties that we started that. And the reason for it was immediately north of the El Dorado Date Shop there was somebody coming in to put in the trailer court. And we didn't like it. We thought it was going to be taken out of agriculture that it should be put to its greatest beneficial use, so we protested.



We went to Riverside before a Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors and then got it rescinded, reversed. And when we went to Riverside, the Planning Commission first, the man who was on the Planning Commission from this area sat on his hands and let somebody else make the motion to approve the trailer court. And it was seconded and duly passed. And we didn't like that. So when it came before the Board of Supervisors for approval, we went down, we went to Riverside again, and they completely reversed the decision of the Planning Commission. So that was stopped. And we felt that we should have an organization, so we formed this Property Owners Association. It was entirely voluntary. And Ted Braun, who had had a lifetime of experience in public relations and consultant to business management and so on, agreed to be the responsible party, the head of it. And we got quite a membership and we raised money by contribution and we protested a good many things that were trying to come into Indian Wells at that time. Indian Wells was clean, there was nothing there and we, and people wanted to get in to put up what we felt would be an inferior development. And we were successful in defending ourselves against all



these people. And then in 1959 we were incorporated as a city, and from then on we had very high restrictions in our CC&R's for building and so on. And it kept, you couldn't deliberately say, well, you can build this and you can't build that, so through minimum sized lots, building lots, and minimum sized living areas, the restrictions and prices were beginning to get a little higher then, too. This confined the sales to people who were able to build a decent house. Part of Indian Wells was zoned for smaller lots and smaller houses. And that was part that Peterson was influential in. And later he came out and supported wholeheartedly the larger lot size development. But I and Ted Braun the entire, what am I trying to say?

CC: Credit.

BC: Credit for Indian Wells because he was able to pull the group together and to talk to them, to answer their questions and to satisfy them, and we had a number of meetings that were well attended. We met a time or two in the Desert Magazine building, and we met at homes some of the time, made many, many trips to Riverside. Ted, really, was the founder of Indian Wells.

CC: Bert was so determined to have Ted recognized during the



time he was mayor. You brought him there, didn't you?

BC: Yes.

CC: And it was a little bit against the, Peterson's had been given the credit. And it wasn't really completely liked, you know, but it was shown that somebody else was. But anyway, he got him in there, he got it on the record.

BC: Ted was reluctant, he wasn't seeking any publicity and he didn't come and . . .

CC: He was a great man.

BC: It was something that came out well for the area. And Indian Wells was clean at that time, absolutely clean. And it hasn't been, with a very few notable exceptions, it hasn't been downgraded in any case.

PY: Did you feel good then about the El Dorado Country Club coming in there?

BC: Country club? Yes, because for that type of thing it was fine. It was for this area just as good as you could get at that time. And Indian Wells Country Club has done a good job of developing.

PY: How about the hotels?

BC: What?

PY: Hotels.



*Erwan*  
BC: Hotels. I feel that the Arvon particularly has been an asset, a credit to the community, and Indian Wells has been a fair development. And the Roadrunner, I guess, has been all right. But it hasn't been the same caliber. And the hotels have contributed substantially toward the financial support of the city of Indian Wells through their Vin tax. It's two or three hundred dollars now a year.

PY: Were there any issues coming up when you were on the council that determined . . .

BC: Any issues?

PY: Yes. That determined the direction of the growth of the city.

BC: I think a number of them that were turned down that established a sort of a pattern for the development. We turned, there were a lot of them turned down, and people used to come in there, promoters I would call them and developers, with a great plan for development. And time was of the essence. In some cases we went along with them after conditioning the approval on certain things that they would do. And then they got approval and they went out to look for money. And they assured us at the beginning that finance is no



problem. We've got it taken care of. And then you approve it. And they go out and look for money and they can't find it. So it falls by the wayside. And the next time something comes along we upgrade it a little more. George Holstein said, when he wanted to develop the corner there for the two-story adobe one, he said before the council, you're going to sit on your hands until everything passes you by. So they said, so what. And certainly the development is going on part of it now is substantially better than he would have done. He's done some good things, too. But it looks better than he proposed.

CC: The sewer was a source of conflict in a sense during your time.

BC: The sewer?

CC: Yes.

BC: Well, there really wasn't, there was never any, oh, the city of council of Indian Wells at that time, there was never a choosing up of sides, three against two, always the same percentage, three against two. There was never that. There was disagreement, but it was talked over and argued out. And then when the vote was cast, there was no hard feeling. It was cast, never the same group



voting the same way. But it wasn't that there weren't issues and there weren't controversies, but it was never settled predicated upon the choosing up of sides and making the decisions that way.

PY: Was there any feeling, you know, the small businesses like the El Dorado Date Shop, that that was not in keeping with the image?

BC: Well, I think it wouldn't have been encouraged at the inception. It was determined by the council that established businesses, and particularly those businesses commercial ventures that were selling the product of the soil, would not be declared out because they were a nonconformist. But to get a new shop in there, no.

PY: How long has that date shop . . . (side 2 of tape 1 ends)

(side 1 of tape 2 begins below:)

PY: So when did you say Bert Ripple put that in?

BC: Late thirties. And it's been continuous ever since.

PY: Was it in his family?

BC: Pardon?

PY: In his family, he has continued it?

CC: Pardon?

BC: No, not his family. No. These two women that run it now have had it for I don't know how many years.



PY: You had one on your property, didn't you, when you were on Cook Street?

BC: Yes, we had a date shop there. And that belonged to . . . we did not operate it, but it was right in front and belonged to John Beck who owned the piece of property back where the old adobe is in Rancho. <sup>Palmers</sup> Palm Airs. And they had that as an written up one time, /old original ancient adobe.

It went back, I guess, to the early 1700s. But it was built quite a bit later than those.

CC: John and Ella were / <sup>here a</sup> couple of weeks ago.

PY: Was that after you built yours?

BC: No. It was an interesting house. They used a lot of highway forms. And they were using three by twelves, I think, for highway form for paving. And they used them for much of the construction. It was adobe. The tractors and the rafters and the sheeting on the roof was all made in adobe highway forms. Very attractive houses. They had a basement, a cellar <sup>cellar</sup> in it, coming from the east where the cellar was important but they never used them.

PY: That's still standing, isn't it? It has been remodeled?

BC: Yes. One of the owners or the owner's wives was found drowned in the pool sometime ago.



There was a fellow in some big pool, reservoir in Palm Desert, when the Thomas had developed the property into the well. I don't know how the thing happened to be full of water, I guess the pump was still working. And somebody came by one morning, here was a guy in the bottom of that, face up.

PY: What time was that?

BC: That was a long time ago.

PY: Did you ever use that reservoir for swimming, the one in Palm Desert?

BC: Did they?

PY: Did you.

BC: No.

py: In your group?

BC: I don't know that I was ever in it. I think people did use it.

PY: I know they did later on. I was just curious in the twenties if they were using it.

BC: I don't think I ever did.

PY: There's always these date shops running along in the road in front of the hotel. First of all, why did you call it frontage road?

BC: Well, I don't call it, well, the frontage road, the only frontage road that I speak of is where there's



a second road like in front of the Indian Wells Hotel.  
And to an extent in front of the ~~4~~rawan, there is  
a frontage road in there. In Palm Desert there's a  
frontage road, but that's the only frontage road that  
I . . .

PY: Oh, so when you were talking about the date shop on  
your property on Cook Street, it's just on the frontage  
part of that.

BC: On the front of the property.

PY: Okay, I just wanted to be clear about that.

BC: Now just on the front of the property.

PY: Are you indicating that most of the people in that area  
were selling their dates themselves?

BC: No.

PY: There weren't many packing houses in that area.

BC: Beck, John Beck, sold his own dates. He raised his  
own back where this adobe was. And Ripple sold his own  
dates. And the Indian Wells Date Shop, I don't believe  
they ever sold their own. We sold them, most of them  
were jewels, and we sold El Dorado Date Shop most  
of them were jewels. And Indian Wells and El Dorado  
and what's the other one, just two of them, I guess.

PY: Didn't the Smeads have one too? Smead.



BC: Pardon me.

PY: Didn't the Smeads have a little shop, too, on a roadside stand?

BC: Pages?

PY: Smead.

BC: Oh, Smead? Well, Percy Day had, no, I don't, maybe the Smead, yes, and Jessie Conroy had one. Jessie had her own dates. And Smead had his own dates. Now he had a little packing house. I don't recall, he must have had a shop. They came back hot in the packing house.

CC: They came from the road.

BC: What?

CC: I don't remember any of them on the road.

BC: Percy Day had a date shop and he started his own.

PY: How did they all process their dates?

BC: Process them? Well, Percy Day had his done by Vandermere and Jessie Conroy had hers done by Vandermere. And Smead did his own handling in his little packing house. We And we handled the jewels, grew and processed the jewels for Indian Wells and El Dorado.

PY: So you had a packing house.

BC: Little packing house, yes.

PY: Down on the eighty acres.



BC: Yes.

PY: Okay. I want to just finish up one of the things that I wanted to talk about. You were mentioning earlier that you had a few techniques that you had tried and then given up on, such as the . . .

BC: That was . . .

PY: High platform.

BC: That was the, well, I . . .

CC: That was the truck that you had the tower over.

BC: Well, I had a jack that I used with a cable around it, but that was never used. We didn't use it. We had developed a tie for tying the female blossom when you pollinated it, after you put the male flower on it, a slip thing with a wire gadget. And it expanded, with a certain type of twine and it expanded as the bunch grew. It didn't just cut it in two. That was a nuisance and it was used used and we used it and a few other people used it, but that was the extent of it because it cost more and it served no particular purpose except what it was designed for, and that wasn't sufficient. Well, there were a number of things. We used to take an indelible pencil before we pollinated and we'd take the spade off the bunch and it was meshed and we'd put the date that, well,



we didn't pollenate the same day that we opened for awhile when we took the spade away because we felt that they were more apt to scar, the berries were more apt to scar when they had that moisture in there from being closed with the spade. So we'd date them and then the next time around, those that were two or three days old, we'd pollenate. But that shortlived. And now they pollenate most of their crop with one trip up, maybe go up twice sometimes. And we used to go up, I don't know, every five days, four, five or six days, to feed them.

PY: Also how you came with offshoots, you were describing that technique you had.

BC: Boxes?

PY: Offshoots.

BC: Offshoots. Oh. Well, I told you about that.

PY: I know you did. Want to tell me again?

BC: Well, we cut a strip of the galvanized iron, or tin to most people, from six to twelve inches wide and maybe two to three feet long and crimped the end of it, put it on the base of the shoot if it was high above the ground maybe four inches, six inches, eight inches, ten inches above the ground, put the thing around there and



close to the base of the palm and fill it with dirt.

And that kept it moist. It promoted the development of

the root, more <sup>than if</sup> it's just out there in the air. I don't think it was necessary, but that's the way we did it.

PY: I understood you sold more offshoots than anyone else in that area.

BC: Well, we didn't brag, cut a great many offshoots and planted them for others, planting and developing other acreage. And we cut and sold a good many of our own.

PY: So you were doing a lot of developing of acreage out there?

BC: For other people.

PY: Yes.

BC: Cutting and planting, securing, cutting and planting.

We had a ranch management business and we took care of dates in that area.

PY: Was that necessary because many of the landowners were absentee?

BC: It was necessary because we needed money.

CC: That is true. They were all in Los Angeles.

BC: Well, not all the people. No, a lot of them were local but they didn't like to work.

PY: Which gets me to one question about those who were working for you or with you, was there any change over



the years, for instance, when you started in the 1920s through now, because I'm sure you're still familiar with the type of workers that would come in and work with the dates?

BC: Well, perhaps. I think during those times there were a percentage of people of Mexican origin was smaller than it is now. There were more Anglos working with dates/<sup>younger men</sup> than there are now. And now for many years the Anglos who were in the early phase of working in date gardens as laborers are becoming foremen and managers. And more and more people from Mexico, it's a sort of a class or clan, they're that work in dates. And there are a lot of them in sales and they do most of the work and make big money. Piecework now. In those days it wasn't piecework. Very rarely was it piecework.

PY: Why is it piecework now?

BC: Pardon me.

PY: Why is there a change, why isn't it piecework/<sup>now</sup>where it didn't use to be?

BC: Well, because of the demand of the workers. And, too, the skill of the workers. And piecework is a very fair basis of employment because of the fast worker. We had a young fellow, a Mexican, working for us for a good many



years that was just a marvelous worker with very little effort. He accomplished more with less effort and just moved through. And a fellow like that is worth twice as much as somebody else. I tried to establish a piece-work basis predicated upon how much I could do. And I worked like the dickens and I had to establish a rate.

I wouldn't last long at it, but I, that was unfair. (laughter)  
I think a man should work as hard as he can regardless what he is.

PY: Then you would hire people to work under you when you were managing with other ranches?

BC: Yes.

PY: Palmeros is a term I never heard before.

BC: Palmero? Well, it is a palm worker.

PY: Oh. I see.

BC: They used to call them that in Mexico in coconuts.

PY: And they still are a highly select group that are close?

BC: Yes, they sort of set themselves apart and years ago . . .

CC: Would you be interested in some apple juice?

PY: No, thank you.

CC: Would you, Bert?

BC: No, thank you.

CC: You're clearing your throat so much, I thought you were.



BC: Well, it's just one of those days. They are a happy lot, laborers, and you would hear them singing all day long in parts, carrying different parts. Just all over the place and now very rarely, and once in awhile you'll hear some conversation in high pitched voices, not like they used to. They used to sing all day long.

PY: Why do you think the changes occurred?

BC: Why did they change?

PY: Yes, why have there been changes?

BC: Well, I think it's the same musical change in Americans. I think they became more aggressive and less interested in their accomplishments, so they didn't sing so much. That's the way people are. Slow in coming.

PY: Well, that's the technique, the technique comes out slowly, but it comes out, too.

BC: Well, but I mean, it hasn't come out in a lot of it. You want something that can be used as part of a historical treatise on the early development of the area when well drillers used to come into the valley. Not in the valley, most of them lived here except for this big one that came in once in awhile for a big well. They'd move out on the job with a team and wagon and



they'd live on the job while they were drilling the well. Not the man who drilled our first well at Springs and Mesquite, but the rest of them would often move out. And they'd have a hard job getting in and they'd just stay there. And they'd live on beans and rice and in a tent, and often the rice would have whiskers on it that long in a day or two.

PY: How long would it take them to do a well?

BC: Oh, I don't recall. Probably three or four weeks.

Everything was done by hand; it's done by machinery now.

CC: The wells were witched.

PY: Oh really!

BC: Many of them.

PY: Successfully mostly.

CC: Have you ever tried them?

PY: No. It's a strange feeling if it works.

CC: Yes.

BC: I've often said I don't believe in it, but I wouldn't drill a well without doing it.

PY: I've heard that before.

CC: On our, I think it's the fifth anniversary, somewhere in there, we had a party at our house and everything was a willow, and for fun we had witching with the willow, and some could and some couldn't. And maybe you



would know the one there that could.

BC: No, I think I started it .

CC: But those who couldn't, if a person who could stood behind them and felt their hand, you'd put your hands on their head, they couldn't hold it either. And they'd get so excited by just twist off the bark in your hand. And it was always in the same place for everybody in the room and Bert said afterwards, just recently to me, that was where, before I guess before the house was built where they had witched the wells, he said that was the best place for water.

BC: Are you going into Idyllwild, Pat?

PY: Yes. It's potluck up there.

CC: There's so many interesting things in the beginnings of an area that you can't recall when you're trying to.

PY: Well, if you think of them, just jot them down.

BC: I think that some, if the knowledge is available that is authentic, you could be put together and put down in a permanent recording form, it would be good. But it takes more than one person to do it. I mean more than one person to have been here and lived through it to . . .

CC: Who is here now who wrote early times, who is living?

PY: Well, was it difficult raising children there in that



area at that time? And schools were quite a ways away, fifteen or twenty miles away.

CC: Yes. We sent, at first we sent Barbara way down to the Desert Sun School in Mecca . And then later she went to the Desert Sun School in Idyllwild. And I don't think it was especially difficult than anywhere else. We had to have a doctor, he had to come a long ways, but it wasn't so to me, the heat, the problem with heat and gnats because they all had impetigo from gnats, eyes, and things that were desert, but no more than children have now . We were right where they have everything, maybe not as much.

PY: How big was Indio in those early twenties and thirties?

BC: Indio? About eight thousand, seven, six, seven or eight thousand.

PY: Did they have most everything you needed in Indio?

CC: Not always.  
Coachella was

BC: /The largest city for awhile, then Indio, and . . .

CC: That's the most discouraging place for them to get married was to go down to Indio.

PY: Coachella was better?

CC: (laughter) I used to even go to Palm Springs to have my hair done because, you know, it didn't take as long to



get to Palm Springs in those days as it does now.

They had little dirt roads winding around the mountains all the way and little cars and such. Just shoot right in there. Palm Springs really was, it was a quiet interesting little village, and in the season it was a very social place. To extremes and in Palm Springs and we lived in the middle.

PY: From the time you moved into, or the early days when you were living in Indian Wells, were you using cars and trucks?

BC: Some. For ranch work, it was horses and mules. They had cars and trucks.

PY: When did you get the first tractor in?

BC: First tractor? Well, I don't know. We bought our first one, we went from the mules to a tractor in, I don't know when it was.

PY: Twenties?

BC: Maybe it was later than twenties, oh yes.

CC: Is that still on?

PY: Now it is.

CC: Well, you know, I was going to say, you know you were asking me about what it was like going shopping out there, I think maybe there were some families it would have been



much harder than for us because we had a nice home and Bert saved the day always in many ways. So I can imagine it would be . . .

BC: I created situations.

CC: Well, I don't know. I never in my life, in married life, ever felt that there was a problem that couldn't be solved. There were never any problems that were, you know, big problems. So I had a secure base behind me that living rather out there without, I think, would have been/desperate.

BC: We didn't have anything until it was paid for.

CC: (laughter) We had a lot. We had a very nice home, it was all furnished. We had a going ranch. I think that starting out we did all right.

BC: It turned out well. I mean . . .

CC: I was thinking back to those times, aside from the struggle, there was heat, and also, there was also quite a bit of aloneness, finding friends that you enjoy, and finding friends that you're, you know, that you like, that you enjoy. There was a very interesting group in the valley. There was always interesting groups down there and I think the desert itself in those early days attracted people who had a sense of adventure.

BC: A lot of talent in the valley.



CC: Yes. A great deal of talent.

BC: And my brother who worked for the U. S. D.A. on date  
a scale, going  
inspection work with/all over the valley, and there was  
a Fred Masson and Mary Edith Masson that lived down  
there in just boards, a terrible place. He said that  
the most beautiful music came out of that house. She  
he said  
was a pianist and a good one. And/that house was just  
teedering and shaking.

lower  
PY: Where was this, down the / Valley?

BC: Down the lower valley.

CC: But there were people who were very fine in art or  
music or in all fields would come down to this valley.  
It had an unusual beginning, and I think perhaps that's  
true of many. Maybe not, I know not all. I think it  
was true of many early . . .  
ing and training.

BC: Kenneth Peck was a gentleman by breed-/He came from the  
east. He came out here with a group of people, then he  
didn't go back. And he started the trading post. There  
were means in the family and he started trading post in  
Coachella. And I guess it was not too successful, but  
he had the only public swimming pool in the area.  
And Kenneth was really a very fine gentleman. And then  
Woodred Klun, who published the Los Angeles Shopping News,



had a ranch down in the Coachella area. And we were very friendly with his daughter and son-in-law. He was a colorful guy.

PY: Let me ask you this, when did you stop thinking of the valley as a whole of being very calm and start thinking of Indian Wells as being separate?

CC: When it was made a city really.

BC: When it started to develop itself.

CC: It was always part of the valley. Didn't you feel that way?

BC: Yes, the valley, yes, we didn't separate.

CC: Our friends are all over the valley.

BC: We didn't separate, but Indian Wells was an established name for the area.

CC: It was Bert who named that city.

PY: Really

BC: The city, but not the original area. And with not too much sport either.

CC: The council wanted to name it El Dorado, the city of El Dorado, and Bert fought for Indian Wells.

PY: On the grounds that's what it had been called first?

BC: Yes. Historically it had a place and had had a place and in many publications, old publications. <sup>James Smeaton</sup>  
~~Jay Smead~~ and  
and Chase talked about Indian Wells in his book. That



was an interesting book, California Desert Trails.  
young

CC: You're an interesting/woman to have taken on an unusual  
work of this type and find it interesting.

PY: Well, I think they have to go hand in hand. (laughter)  
If you don't find it interesting, you won't go along  
with it.

BC: Well, did Clarice ask you about how Lou camped  
and what . . . (tape turned off)

BC: Speak.

PY: Speak.

CC: Well, in that two-story adobe they had a  
refrigerator when I came down here. And it was a big  
commercial box in that kitchen. And it had many doors  
and the reason they put that in was because we had  
friends from the city who came down and they would bring  
all kinds of food. Enough to last Bert and his brother  
a couple of weeks. They had to have a place to put it.  
Before that it must have been ice.

BC: We had an ice box before that that we made. Bring out  
a block of ice from Indio, put in there and it would  
last about a week.

?RY: How would you make ice.

BC: Well, they made it in Indio. They had an ice plant

unknown male  
speaker



down there.

RY: How do you make ice?

BC: Well, you freeze water. (laughter)

RY: No, I mean, I understand, but . . .

BC: Well, they had these tanks that are about that high and that wide about so that are tapered. And they fill them with water and put in a brine solution, circulates around them and then they freeze and bring them out and because of the taper there they're easy to get out. I guess they warm them a / <sup>little or</sup> put them in the sun and the ice comes right out. But , ice would last, I think, about a week.

RY: How did they come out, by car?

BC: We got it, we went down and got it.

RY: No, I mean your friends?

BC: Yes, we drove, we drove down.

PY: Well, when did you get electricity in the area? What were you running the refrigerator on?

BC: Electricity. We had electricity when we came here. No telephone, but electricity. But these people used to . . . and they would bring down, among other things . . . This man was a pharmacist; he had a drugstore. And they'd always bring down, Clarice wasn't always as fastidious as she is now (laughter), almost so, and among other things, they'd bring down several pounds



of chocolate candy.

CC: Oh, that's what you mean by fastidious.

BC: And after they had retired for the evening Clarice and I would hit some of these boxes of chocolate candy, (laughter).

CC: No wonder I had problems. Well, they brought down, what was that, English toffee.

PY: Oh. My favorite too.

CC: (laughter) Who could resist it? I'd stay away from it while everybody was around and I had some moral courage, but when they were/ <sup>gone and</sup> Bert opened a box of chocolate, the very smell . . . (laughter)

BC: But after that we had a habit and we thought it was a virtue and it turned out to be a vice, and that was just <sup>nobody</sup> before we went to bed, when/ would be coming in, Clarice would mince garlic, I don't know how many cloves of garlic and we got this pumpernickel bread, it was very compact and a little square loaf like that and sliced and very hard and compact. She'd put about so much butter on it, then about twice that much garlic on it and we'd eat that stuff and it became habit forming. And we were grown before we realized that people . . . this was oozing out your pores the next day, and the day thereafter, and we wondered why we had lost our .



CC: But, oh, if you eat garlic in any quantity, it is just  
like dope. You just crave it.

KY: Really, I've never . . .